

DATE: June 13, 1977

TO : To the file

FROM : J. Lederberg

SUBJECT: Conversations with Frank Hungate re E. L. Tatum

Frank came to Stanford in the fall of 1940. He started his work in *Drosophila*, but had only fringe information about the work in the laboratory because he was a teaching assistant that year. He knew that there was intense, well organized, rationale planning going on with respect to looking for the appropriate organism, but he was not himself party to the discussion. That planning began before he came to Stanford. He does not know exactly when the decision was made to change organism, but by December, or January 1941 at the latest, there was a total shift of the lab to the *Neurospora* effort.

He did a disserata with an organism of a defined genetics and an organism that could be grown on a defined medium and, as Hungate first told the story, he thought that had been settled for *Neurospora* by Freice.

Despite every leading question to the contrary that I offered, he believed that they were firmly set on seeking nutritional mutants -- not pigment changes! -- from the very beginning. (I ought to look to seek whether albino mutants had already been described prior to that time.) Hungate characterized the intellectual effort as a very close interaction between Beadle and Tatum, between genetics and biochemistry, and he greatly admired it as a well organized intellectual effort to design the ultimate test system. He did not know anything about the course in comparative biochemistry that Tatum is suppose to have given the previous year. He suggested that Garrett, Hardin, or Morris Pickett would be the people to contact about that.

Molly Hungate came to Stanford only in the fall of 1941, and therefore could not add first-hand information.

Just one further point, Hungate says that he saw the actual tubes in which the first mutants appeared. I think I will add a note asking him to describe them.*

* See letter of 6-15-77

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